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QUESTIONS OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD

THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CYPRUS

Report of the Secretary-General submitted pursuant to Commission on Human Rights decision 2000/103

1. The Commission on Human Rights, in its decision 2000/103 of 18 April 2000, decided, without a vote, to retain on its agenda sub-item (a), entitled "Question of human rights in Cyprus", of the item entitled "Question of the violation of human rights and fundamental freedoms in any part of the world" and to give it due priority at its fifty-seventh session, it being understood that action required by previous resolutions of the Commission on the subject (see resolution 1987/50, its most recent on this subject), would continue to remain operative, including the request to the Secretary-General to provide a report to the Commission regarding their implementation. The present report is submitted pursuant to that decision and is based on United Nations activities, namely the Secretary-General's mission of good offices, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) and the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus, from December 1999 to 30 November 2000.

2. Since his previous report to the Commission on Human Rights, in February 2000 (E/CN.4/2000/26), the Secretary-General's personal efforts have continued to be aimed at achieving a comprehensive settlement of the Cyprus problem. To this end he has been assisted by his Special Adviser on Cyprus, Mr. Alvaro de Soto, and his Acting Special Representative and Chief of Mission of UNFICYP, Mr. Zbigniew Wlosowicz, who assumed his post on 15 June 2000.

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* Reissued for technical reasons.

Mission of good offices

3. Pursuant to Security Council resolution 1250 (1999) and in response to the Secretary-General's invitation, Mr. Glafcos Clerides and Mr. Rauf Denktash agreed to start proximity talks in New York on 3 December 1999 in order to prepare the ground for meaningful negotiations leading to a comprehensive settlement. The first round of talks, which continued until 14 December 1999, was followed by sessions in Geneva from 31 January to 8 February 2000. The talks were facilitated by the Secretary-General's Special Adviser, Mr. de Soto, who was assisted by a small team of Secretariat and UNFICYP staff and international consultants as required. Further sessions were held in July-August 2000 in Geneva, in September 2000 in New York and again in Geneva in October-November 2000. Mr. de Soto also met with the two leaders during visits to Cyprus on four occasions during the year, and has held discussions in Athens and Ankara during his trips to the region.

Activities of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP)

4. Pending a settlement, UNFICYP has continued, within its mandate, to perform humanitarian tasks in support of Greek Cypriots, Turkish Cypriots and others living in areas where they constitute a minority. This activity has included contact with 428 Greek Cypriots and 165 Maronites living in the northern part of the island, to whom UNFICYP has continued to deliver foodstuffs, welfare payments and other supplies from the Government, and for whom it has facilitated temporary travel to the south for family and other reasons. Regarding the easing of certain restrictions on movement between the two sides, which the Turkish Cypriot authorities announced in May 2000, crossing fees imposed by them in 1988 have been reduced from £15 to £1. However, Greek Cypriots seeking to extend their visits to relatives living in the Karpas area have encountered obstacles. The Turkish Cypriot authorities have been less forthcoming than in the past with respect to crossings arranged by UNFICYP for humanitarian reasons.

5. Greek Cypriots and Maronites residing in the north are still precluded effectively from bequeathing immovable property to Greek Cypriot or Maronite heirs who are resident elsewhere. The Turkish Cypriot authorities reviewed 120 schoolbooks provided for the Greek Cypriot School in Rizokarpaso. They were ultimately delivered to the school, except for approximately one third, whose contents were considered objectionable.

6. UNFICYP has also maintained its regular liaison visits to a number of Turkish Cypriots living in the southern part of the island who have made themselves known to the Force, and from time to time has assisted those people in arranging meetings with family members living in the north.

7. UNFICYP continued its efforts to encourage contact and cooperation between Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots and to build trust through the promotion of activities which could bring them into contact in a positive atmosphere. These activities continued, despite the ongoing restriction on participation by Turkish Cypriots imposed by the Turkish Cypriot authorities. Social gatherings involving members of the general public were held, as well as meetings of political party representatives, professional forums, youth workshops and discussions among

business representatives and others. For its part, the Turkish Cypriot side cites "the irrelevance of such contacts whilst the embargoes imposed by the Greek Cypriot authorities (mentioned in document S/1998/488) persist".

8. Since the beginning of March 2000, three visits were made by Greek Cypriot pilgrims to the Apostolos Andreas monastery in the Karpas area in the north. Groups of Turkish Cypriots travelled on one occasion to Hala Sultan Mosque near Larnaca in the south, and twice through the south to Kokkina in the west of the island. These trips involved in total over 4,500 people. No further visits have taken place since the Government of Cyprus cancelled a planned August trip by Turkish Cypriots to Kokkina, in response to military activity by the Turkish forces in the village of Strovilia.

9. UNFICYP continued to monitor the situation in the fenced area of Varosha, which continued to change. During the period under review, the refurbishment of an additional building was completed and work started on two more buildings. The United Nations continues to hold the Government of Turkey responsible for maintaining the status quo in Varosha.

Missing persons

10. After an interruption of more than three years, the Committee on Missing Persons in Cyprus in January 2000 held its one hundred and eighty-third session and discussed the possibility of resuming its investigative work. Following the untimely death of the third member of the Committee, Ambassador Jean-Pierre Ritter, on 17 January 2000, his first assistant has worked with the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot members to overcome obstacles and enable the Committee to resume its activities and to reach binding decisions. This effort continues.

11. The first assistant to the third member has also remained at the disposal of the two sides to assist them as necessary with the implementation of the 31 July 1997 agreement on missing persons concluded by Mr. Clerides and Mr. Denktash. Although outside of the sphere of the Committee, the agreement represents an important guarantee for the families of the missing persons. In 1998, the two sides, which are solely responsible for its implementation, had provided each other with information at their disposal on the location of graves of Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot missing persons. In addition to other unilateral measures, the Greek Cypriot side has undertaken exhumation and identification of remains. However, the two sides have not yet been able to work out arrangements for the exchange of the remains.

Other reports

12. The activities of UNFICYP, including those relating to its humanitarian responsibilities, are described in the Secretary-General's most recent reports to the Security Council (S/2000/496 and S/2000/1138).